



6-12 Social Studies Asynchronous Activities

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The Literacy and Social Studies department has developed activities for your student to participate in at home asynchronously. For questions and more information about this document, please contact the following:

Literacy and Social Studies Department
Molly Montague, mfmontague@seattleschools.org

The Battle of Adwa

10th Grade Social Studies World History

These lessons were adapted from the Stanford History Education Group Reading Like a Historian materials.

On March 1, 1896, a massive Ethiopian army routed Italian forces at the Battle of Adwa. The battle marked the largest military triumph of an African state over a European army in the 19th century and helped Ethiopia retain its independence during Europe's "scramble for Africa." In this three-day lesson you will read three different textbook accounts of the battle – two American and one Ethiopian – to investigate the question: ***How did Ethiopia defeat Italy at the Battle of Adwa?***

The Battle of Adwa



Painting of Battle of Adwa

This is a painting of the Battle of Adwa, which was painted by an unknown Ethiopian artist. The exact date of the painting is also unknown. The battle was fought between Ethiopia and Italy on March 1, 1896. It lasted one day, and was a decisive victory for Ethiopia.

The Scramble for Africa

The battle was significant because it marked the biggest African victory over a European army in the 19th century. The battle helped keep Ethiopia, or Abyssinia, one of the only parts of Africa to remain independent during the “scramble for Africa” in the second half of the 19th century – a time when European powers established colonies across most of African continent.



Central Historical Question

How was Ethiopia able to defeat Italy at the Battle of Adwa?

First Textbook Account

Ethiopian Independence

“Only the African nation of Ethiopia was able to retain its independence by matching European firepower. In 1889 the emperor of Ethiopia, Menelik II, undertook a program of modernization that included a modern Army.

In 1895, Italian forces invaded Ethiopia over a treaty dispute. Within a year, however, Menelik’s forces – more numerous and better armed than the Italians – defeated the Italians at the Battle of Adwa.” (p.760)

World History Textbook, 2006

First Textbook Account Questions

After reading the first textbook account, answer the following questions:

- What is the source?
- How long is the passage? Why is this important?
- How does the textbook account help you answer the research question: *How was Ethiopia able to defeat the Italian army at the Battle of Adwa and stay independent?*

First Textbook Account Possible Responses

- What is the source?
 - The excerpt comes from an American, World History Textbook published in 2006.
- How long is the passage? Why is this important?
 - The passage is short, so it might not have a lot of detailed information.
- How does the textbook account help you answer the research question: *How was Ethiopia able to defeat the Italian army at the Battle of Adwa and stay independent?*
 - This excerpt doesn't say much because it is so short, but it does say that Ethiopia won because it had a bigger and better army.

Your Task

Historical Research Question: ***How was Ethiopia able to defeat the Italian army at the Battle of Adwa and stay independent?***

- You will read 2 more different textbook accounts, 1 American and 1 Ethiopian.
- You will compare and contrast – or corroborate – information across these different textbooks.
- Finally, you will use the texts to answer the historical research question.

Day 1: Read and Respond

- Read Documents A and B
- Answer the Guiding Questions

- Print the “[Battle of Adwa Student Materials](#)” PDF or read the documents on the next slides and answer the questions on a separate sheet of paper.

Document A: American Textbook

Ethiopia: A Successful Resistance

Ethiopia was the only African nation that successfully resisted the Europeans. Its victory was due to one man – Menelik II. He became emperor of Ethiopia in 1889. He successfully played Italians, French, and British against each other, all of whom were striving to bring Ethiopia into their spheres of influence. In the meantime, he built up a large arsenal of modern weapons purchased from France and Russia. In 1889, shortly after Menelik had signed a treaty with Italy, he discovered differences between the wording of the treaty in the Ethiopian language and in Italian. Menelik believed he was giving up only a tiny portion of Ethiopia. However, the Italians claimed all of Ethiopia as a protectorate. Meanwhile, the Italian forces were advancing into northern Ethiopia. Menelik declared war. In 1896, in one of the greatest battles in the history of Africa – the Battle of Adowa – Ethiopian forces successfully defeated the Italians and kept their nation independent. After the battle, Menelik continued to stockpile rifles and other modern weapons in case another foreign power challenged Ethiopia's liberty.

Source: Beck, R. B., Black, L., Krieger, L.S., Naylor, P.C., Shabaka, D.I. (2006)
Modern world history: Patterns of interaction. McDougal Littell. p. 349.

Guiding Questions

American Textbook
1. Who, according to this textbook, was most responsible for the Ethiopian victory?
2. What event led to the battle?
3. Who, according to this account, started the war?
4. Why, according to this account, did Ethiopia win the battle?
5. How is this account similar to and different from the first textbook account?

Document B: Ethiopian Textbook

Foreign Relations with Italy

Menelik had very close relations with foreign nations, especially with Italy. The relationship between Italy and Ethiopia began as a friendly one, but it deteriorated after the Treaty of Wuchale was signed between them in 1889. The cause of the conflict was Article XVII of the Wuchale Treaty, which was written differently in Amharic and Italian. The Amharic version says that Ethiopia could use the services of Italy in her foreign relations with Europe. The Italian version bound Menelik to make all his foreign decisions through Italy. Menelik asked Italy to change the Italian version of Article XVII. Italy refused. As a result, Menelik rejected the entire treaty. Thus, when peaceful methods of trying to occupy Ethiopia failed, the Italian government began preparation to occupy Ethiopia by force. In 1895, the Italians invaded Ethiopia in the north. In the same year, 1895, Menelik declared war on Italy and marched northwards to fight the Italians.

The Battle of Adwa (1896)

The Battle of Adwa was fought in March 1896 between the Ethiopian army commanded by Menelik and the Italian army commanded by General Baratieri. The battle was started by the Italian commander Baratieri because he was given orders by the Italian prime Minister Crispi to start the war quickly.

The battle began at dawn on March 1, 1896. The battle lasted for one full day. The result of the battle was unexpected and surprising to the world. The well-trained and well-armed Italian force was defeated by the ill-trained and not well-armed Ethiopian force. Ethiopia was victorious because of her people's high degree of courage and the full support of the people. Moreover, Ethiopian women supplied water and arms to the fighters. They carried the wounded to camps and encouraged the fighters to fight with great courage.

Source: Mehari, Getachew, Mamo, A., Alemu, T., T'Giorgis, S., & Dissassa, M. (2006). *Social studies student textbook: Grade 8*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Educational Materials Production and Distribution Enterprise. p. 86-88.

Guiding Questions

Ethiopian Textbook

1. According to this account, what events led to war between Ethiopia and Italy?
How is this version similar to and different from textbook A?

2. Who, according to this account, started the battle? Why did they start the battle?

3. Why, according to this account, did Ethiopia win the battle? How does this compare to the other accounts?

End Day 1

Begin Day 2

Day 2: Make a Claim

Central Historical Question:

How was Ethiopia able to defeat the Italian army at the Battle of Adwa and stay independent?

- Reread your answers from yesterday.
- Write a response to the central historical question using evidence from the documents.

Making a Claim:

How did Ethiopia defeat Italy at the Battle of Adwa?

Write or type your response, using evidence from the documents to support your claim.

Name

Date

Course

How did Ethiopia defeat Italy at the Battle of Adwa?

End Day 2

Begin Day 3

Day 3: Read More to Extend Your Learning

Websites:

- [124 years ago, Ethiopian men and women defeated the Italian army in the Battle of Adwa](#). Quartz Africa
- [Battle of Adwa](#) Britannica
- [Ethiopia wins the battle of Adwa](#) African American Registry
- [Battle of Adwa \(Adowa\), 1896](#) Black Past

Videos:

- [How did Italy Lose to Ethiopia? \(1895\)](#) Animated History
- [Ethiopia celebrates defeat of Italian forces in the Battle of Adwa](#) SABC News

Thinking Like a Historian

Select 1 or 2 articles or videos about the Battle of Adwa and respond to the sourcing and contextualization questions.

Historical Reading Skills	Questions
Sourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who wrote this?• What is the author's perspective?• When was it written?• Where was it written?• Why was it written?• Is it reliable? Why? Why not?
Contextualization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When and where was the document created?• What was different then? What was the same?• How might the circumstances in which the document was created affect its content?

Sourcing & Contextualization Format

For each additional resource you researched:

- Hand write or type your responses.
- Include the title of the article, the author's name (if available) and the title of the website.
- Sourcing Questions:
 - Who wrote this?
 - What is the author's perspective?
 - When, where why was it written?
 - Is it reliable? Why or why not?
- Contextualization Questions:
 - When and where was this document created?
 - What was different then? What was the same?
 - How might the circumstances in which the document was created affect its content?
- Reflect: How does this additional information add to your understanding of the events of the Battle of Adwa?